

A Systemic Functional Description Of The Grammar Of Arabic

by
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Dedication

I simply dedicate this work to mum, dad and to all the great Arab grammarians from centuries past.

Declaration

I hereby certify that this thesis is my own work that it has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution and that wherever contributions of others are involved, every effort has been made to indicate this clearly with due reference to the literature and acknowledgement of sources.

Mohamed Ali Bardi.

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Abstract

This thesis is a comprehensive text-based interpretation of the grammar of Arabic. It is a descriptive sketch of the grammar of Arabic based on systemic functional theory and systemic functional descriptions of other languages. The thesis has two aims and is divided into six chapters: apart from the first and the last chapters, which are respectively the introduction and the conclusion, each of the remaining four corresponds to one of the three metafunctions, with one metafunction viz. the ideational one split over two chapters. Thus, Chapter 2 deals with the interpersonal metafunction, Chapters 3 and 4 with the ideational metafunction – Chapter 3 with the experiential mode and Chapter 4 with the logical mode - and finally Chapter 5 with the textual metafunction.

The first aim of this work is to elaborate a systemic description of the grammar of Arabic. It can be better understood by intersecting the spectrum of metafunction with the hierarchy of rank. This will locate the areas of interest of the thesis within concrete and familiar dimensions of the lexicogrammar. These dimensions are first and foremost the clause, then the prepositional phrase, nominal and verbal groups and to a lesser extent the morpheme which is studied especially in relation to the verbal group, more precisely Subject affixes and the systems of MODALITY and POLARITY.

The second aim of this thesis is to assess the work of Arab grammarians to see whether it can be developed and also whether it can be borrowed from. This is related to a future objective, which consists of replacing the English terminology used in this description with an Arabic one. It would be more practical to use terms which are familiar to Arab grammarians than come up with new ones – more practical, especially when these terms refer to similar systemic functional notions. As the Arab tradition had dealt with notions similar to those dealt with by systemic functional descriptions, when the time comes to develop an Arab terminology, many Arabic terms used by Arab grammarians will be kept as they are. However, as the work of Arab grammarians is less sophisticated than the systemic functional paradigm, I expect that there will be much work that needs to be done to come up with new adequate terms.

In terms of methodology, this description (which explores both the paradigmatic and syntagmatic aspects of the grammar of Arabic) is register-based. As text types instantiate a particular set of choices from the system of lexicogrammar, data selection for each chapter is not random. In chapter 2 for instance, while studying the resources of Arabic for enacting social roles and relations, dialogic texts were studied more closely than other text types.

This description of the grammar of Arabic also starts from theory, moves towards instances and then goes back to theory. Though the paradigmatic networks which present different lexicogrammatical systems find their origin in systemic functional theory and systemic functional descriptions, the final sketch is proper to Arabic as the whole process is based on analysis carried out on texts in the target language (i.e. Arabic). In this thesis, language is seen as meaning potential and is described through instances of Arabic text, which have been treated as samples or points of access to this system we use to mean. As different text types instantiate different aspects of the system, it was necessary to look at a variety of registers set within a variety of contexts. The thesis does not claim to be complete though, but the final product is fairly comprehensive.

Finally, in this description, Arabic has been at times likened to English, sometimes French and at others Japanese and Chinese, this is to be expected as all these aforementioned descriptions share one theoretical background. The similarities remain just that (i.e. similarities) and are used to make some points easier to understand. In other words, they are just typological generalizations and they should not be taken in any way as “universal entities” or as a proof that “the theory is Anglo-centric” (Matthiessen et al. 2000: 14).

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Key To Transliteration And Abbreviation

1 Key To The Transliteration Of The Arabic Alphabet

1.1 Short Vowels

Vowel	Transliteration
ا	?a
إ	?i
أ	?u

1.2 Long Vowels

Vowel	Transliteration
آ	?a:
ئي	?i:
ؤ	?u:

1.3 The Arabic Alphabet

Letter	Transliteration	Arabic pronunciation
ا	?a	?alif
ب	ba	ba
ت	ta	ta
ث	tha	tha
ج	ja	ji:m
ح	Ha	Ha
خ	xa	xa
د	da	da:l
ذ	dha	dha:l
ر	ra	ra:?
ز	za	zi:n
س	sa	si:n
ش	sha	shi:n
ص	Sa	Sa:d
ض	DHa	DHa:d
ط	Ta	Ta:
ظ	Da	Da:?
ع	Ga	Gayn
غ	GHa	GHayn
ف	fa	fa:
ق	qa	qa:f
ك	ka	ka:f
ل	la	la:m
م	ma	mi:m
ن	na	nu:n
هـ	ha	ha:
و	wa	wa:w
ي	ya	ya:

Abbreviation

Basically, in addition to the standard abbreviations, which I mainly used for glossing, I have also used some other fewer variations, especially in analyzing different clauses. These latter have been used due to formatting problems. I tried to use just the few first letters of a word, enough to make it fit in a table cell, but at the same time as many letters as possible for the term to become clear.

A

Accomp.....Accompaniment

Adjunc.....Adjunct

Attrib.....Attributor

attrib.....attributive

B

behave.....behavioural

Benef.....Beneficiary

C

cau.....Causative

circum. Adjunct.....circumstantial Adjunct

CLA.....Classical Arabic

comm.....command

comm. Adjunct.....comment Adjunct

Comp/ Compl..... Complement

comp/compl part.....complexing particle

compo.....composition

con.....conditional

conj.....conjunction/ conjunctive

const/ constit.....constituency

E

eff.....effective

enhance.....enhancement

exclam.....exclamative

exist.....existential

exper.....experiential

exten.....extension

F

F.....Finite

F- / F+.....Finite with respectively negative or positive polarity.

F. fut. mod..... Finite, future modality

F. mod. Part.....Finite modal particle

I

Identif.....Identified (Token)

imp.....imperative

int.....interrogative

interp.....interpersonal analysis

interp. elem.....interpersonal element

intrans.....intransitive

L

lit. tran/ lit trans.....literal translation

Loc.....Location

Loc. spa.....Location: spatial.

M

m. Adj.....mood Adunct

mat.....material

Med.....Medium

ment.....mental

mid.....middle

m. part.....modal particle

mod.....modality/ modal

mod. interrog.....modal interrogative

(mod- fut).....(modal- future)

MSA.....Modern Standard Arabic.

N

n. Them.....nominal Theme

neg. part.....negative particle

O

Oper.....Operator

Origin.....Original

P

p.....past

part.....particle

Phen/ Phenom.....Phenomenon

pr/ pres.....present

prep. ph..... prepositional phrase

Predic/ Pred..... Predicate

prob.....probability

Proc.....Process

R

rel.....relational

S

(S).....Subject

Sens.....Senser

spa.....spatial

(sub).....(subjunctive)

(Subj).....(Subject)

Subj..... Subject

T

temp.....temporal

text.....textual

top.....topical

transl..... transliteration

trans.....translation

trans.....transitive

V

v.g. part.....verbal group particle
v. Them.....verbal Theme

Glossing Abbreviations

A

A.PART.....active participle
ACC.....accusative
AUX.....auxiliary

C

CAUS.....causative
COMP.....complement
COND.....conditional
COP.....copula

D

DEF.....definite
DEM.....demonstrative
DET.....determiner
DU.....dual

F

F.....feminine
FUT.....future

G

GEN.....genitive

I

IMP.....imperative
IMPERF.....imperfect
IND.....indicative
INDF.....indefinite

M

M.....masculine

N

NEG.....negative
NOM.....nominative

O

OBJ.....object
OPER.....operator

P

P.PART.....passive participle
PASS.....passive
PERF.....perfect
PL.....plural
POSS.....possessive
PRED.....predicator
PRS.....present

S

SBJ.....subject

SBJV.....subjunctive

SG.....singular

V

VOC.....vocative

Pronouns


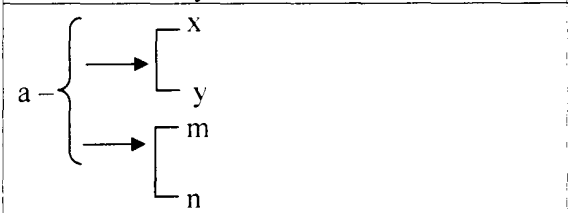
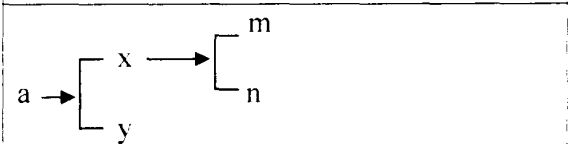

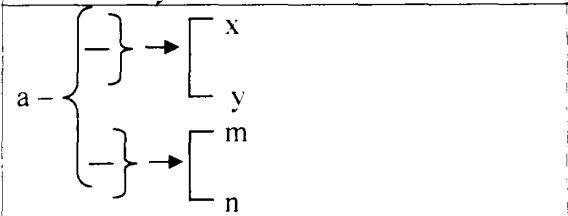
1.....first person

2.....second person

3.....third person

Abbreviations	Arabic	English
1SG	أنا	I
1PL	نحن	we
2MSG	أنت	you
2FSG	أنتِ	you
2MDU	أنتما	you
2MPL	انتم	you
2FPL	أنتن	you
3MSG	هو	he
3FSG	هي	she
3MDU/FDU	هما	they
3MPL	هم	they
3FPL	هن	they

Systemic notations

	<p>This refers to a system x/y with entry condition 'a'. If 'a' then either 'x or y'.</p>
	<p>Simultaneity viz. this means there are two simultaneous systems 'x/ y' and 'm/ n', both having entry condition 'a'. (If 'a', then simultaneously either 'x or y' and 'm or n').</p>
	<p>Delicacy ordering: this means there is a system 'x/ y' with entry condition 'a'. If 'a' then 'x or y'. And if x then 'm or n'.</p>
	<p>This means that there is a system x/y with one entry condition 'a'. If 'a', then simultaneously 'x or y'.</p>
	<p>Conditional + simultaneous marking</p> <p>This means there are two systems 'x/ y' and 'm/ n'. If 'a', then simultaneously either 'x or y' and 'm or n'</p>

(Matthiessen 1995 in Teruya 1998)